Search for Gwinnett’s top teacher narrows to 25

As Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) celebrates its biggest asset, its teachers, the school district has narrowed its search for this school year’s top educator to 25 professionals. The school system announced today the names of the 25 semifinalists for the 2011 Gwinnett County Teacher of the Year (TOTY) honor. The group of 15 elementary, 5 middle, and 5 high school teachers was selected from the initial impressive list of 123 local school Teachers of the Year who were nominated by their colleagues at their local schools. The 2011 Gwinnett County Teacher of the Year will be announced at the annual celebration on Thursday, November 4.

This year’s Gwinnett County Teacher of the Year semifinalists by level are:

**Elementary Level:**
- Hope Abraham of Corley Elementary— 3rd Grade Teacher
- Julie Bailey-Wegner of Mulberry Elementary— 5th Grade Teacher
- Kelli McGinnis Boudreaux of Freeman’s Mill Elementary— 5th Grade Special Education Teacher
- Earl Bushman of Stripling Elementary— Gifted Education and Enrichment Teacher (Grades 1-5)
- Judy Camp of Peachtree Elementary— 5th Grade Teacher
- Farrah T. Jones of Cedar Hill Elementary— Music and Chorus Teacher
- Heidi Jones of Craig Elementary— Literacy Coach
- Susan Yost Keeney of Cooper Elementary— Special Education Teacher- Self-Contained Moderate Intellectual Disabilities (Grades 4-5)
- Donna Knapp of Winn Holt Elementary— Music Specialist (Grades 1-5)
- Tammy Knox of Jackson Elementary— 2nd Grade Teacher
- Bonnie Lavine of Gwin Oaks Elementary— Special Education Teacher- Severe and Profound Intellectual Disabilities (Grade 3-5)
- Venetia Lowe of Shiloh Elementary— 5th Grade Teacher
- Stephanie S. Reid of Camp Creek Elementary— 2nd Grade Teacher
- Katie Sample of Simonton Elementary— Literacy Coach
- Kathy R. Williams of Fort Daniel Elementary— Local School Technology Coordinator

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Middle School Level:

Rayvin C. Guyton of Shiloh Middle— 7th Grade Special Education Mathematics Teacher

Jennifer Helfrich of Radloff Middle— Media Specialist

Sergio Parra of Osborne Middle— Spanish Teacher

Debbie Trevino of Bay Creek Middle— 8th Grade Gifted Language Arts Teacher

Dottie Wilson of McConnell Middle— 8th Grade Gifted Mathematics Teacher

High School Level:

Jon Aldrich of Collins Hill High— Advanced Placement U.S. History and Advanced Placement Government Teacher

Kim Hamman of Brookwood High— 9th Grade Gifted Biology Teacher

Steve Kuninsky of Parkview High— Honors, Gifted, and Advanced Placement Biology Teacher

Katie Saldarriaga of North Gwinnett High— English to Speakers of Other Languages Social Studies Teacher

John Willis of Gwinnett School of Mathematics, Science, and Technology— 9th Grade Physics Teacher

A selection committee— made up of teachers, central office personnel, and administrators— will now consider the semifinalists’ applications and answers to a set of additional questions in order to determine six finalists. Committee members will then make site visits to the classrooms of the six finalists and conduct thorough interviews with each educator.

During the classroom visit, the committee members will look for original teaching methods, study the teacher’s teaching philosophy, and review any special class projects the teacher has initiated. They also will review each teacher’s educational degrees and civic activities.

Based on their findings, committee members will select an elementary, middle, and a high school Teacher of the Year from the field of six finalists. They will be announced during the banquet on November 4. One of these three “level winners” will be named Gwinnett’s 2011 Teacher of the Year and will be eligible to compete for the state TOTY title.